

Sūrah Mursalāt

Context of the *Sūrah* and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* resembles Sūrah Dhāriyāt of the sixth group as regards its central theme, introductory passage and line of reasoning, and resembles Sūrah Raḥmān as regards its mood and style. In Sūrah Dhāriyāt, oaths are sworn by the multifarious effects of winds to substantiate the Day of Judgement and punishment which will be meted out on that Day. The following verse of the *sūrah*: (٥١:٥-٦) **إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ** (the threat of the punishment being sounded to you is true, and reward and punishment is bound to come, (51:5-6)) depicts its central theme. Similarly, in this *sūrah* too, after the multifarious effects caused by winds are presented in the form of oaths, it is stated (٧٧:٧) **إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ** (what you are being threatened with is certain to come, (77:7)).

Its resemblance in mood and style with Sūrah Raḥmān stems from the fact that just as the verse **فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ** (which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?) is repeated many times in that *sūrah*, similarly the verse **وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ** (devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny) is repeated many times in this one. I have already explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Raḥmān that *sūrahs* which contain repetitive verses are generally addressed to those stubborn and obdurate people who try to deny a manifest truth mainly due to arrogance and haughtiness. For such people, arguments do not suffice; it is essential that after every argument they be warned of their crime and its fate. If this nature of the addressees is not taken into consideration, then just as the medicine given by a doctor who is not aware of the temperament of a sick person is not able to cure that person, similarly, the words of a person who is not aware of the nature of his addressee fail to produce the desired result. Variation in the temperament of people is a natural thing and thus keeping this in consideration is an essential requirement of the eloquence of a discourse. People who are not aware of this aspect think such repetitive verses to be mere repetition, whereas the connoisseurs of the Qur'ān know that such repetition has great majesty and grandeur.

Its relationship with Sūrah Dahr, the previous *sūrah* relates to the basis of arguments offered. Though the subject of both *sūrahs* is the same, the nature of arguments is different. In the previous *sūrah*, it is shown that

the awareness of good and evil ordained in human nature substantiates reward and punishment; those who deny this obvious reality are warned while those who accept this testimony of their inner-self and set their lives according to it are given glad tidings. In this *sūrah*, the signs in the world around man are the basis of the arguments. If there is any allusion to human nature as a basis of argumentation, it is merely a rudimentary reference.

The mood of both *sūrahs* is very distinct. Glad tidings dominate the latter while warnings dominate this *sūrah*. The repetitive verse in this *sūrah* reflects very clearly its mood.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-7): The multifarious effects of the winds substantiate the fact that the punishment of this world and the Hereafter of which people are being warned is not something impossible. Whenever the Almighty wanted, He used His winds and clouds to punish previous nations and whenever He wants He will punish the Quraysh too through these elements. If they want to thrive, they should seek a lesson from the signs which signify the boons and banes of the Almighty. They must not dare hasten it because of their deeds.

Verses (8-15): A portrayal of the horrors of the Day of Judgement. Evident from this portrayal is that the greatest objects of this universe are not immortal; nothing can exist of its own accord and nothing is independent; everything exists because of God's decree and moves with His permission only. A day will come when the Almighty will destroy the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. On that day, the accounts of the messengers and their people will be presented. It will be a very important day. Judgement will be passed on that day regarding what the messengers told their people and how these people behaved with them. On that day, people who rejected their messengers will be devastated.

Verses (16-19): The Quraysh are asked to seek a lesson from their history by asking them about it; The Almighty destroyed previous nations and the succeeding ones too who followed their ways. If this is an established and irrefutable fact, how can God's practice regarding criminals change?

Verses (20-24): A reference to God's power, providence and wisdom by depicting the physical structure of man and his various phases of creation. The purpose of this mention is that man's own creation bears testimony that re-creating him is not at all difficult for His Creator. Mankind shall definitely be raised to life once again. Those who are insisting on denying this will be doomed on that day.

Verses (25-28): Those who live and die, do so on the earth created by

God. The Almighty has made available in it the means of their sustenance. Neither is anyone beyond God's control nor is anyone self-sufficient from His sustenance. This situation bears testimony that one day the Almighty will necessarily gather all people. Cursed will be those on that day who did not acknowledge His providence and power in this world; they while remaining inebriated by the pleasures of life kept on denying the Day of Judgement.

Verses (29-34): A portrayal of the torment that these disbelievers will face in the Hereafter.

Verses (35-40): A depiction of the helplessness of the disbelievers.

Verses (41-45): A portrayal of the success attained by those who were fearful of the Almighty.

Verses (46-50): A declaration of warning to the Quraysh on their arrogance and an expression of hopelessness on their embracing faith.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ عُرْفًا (١) فَالْعَاصِفَاتِ عَصْفًا (٢) وَالتَّائِشِرَاتِ نَشْرًا (٣) فَالْفَارِقَاتِ فَرَقًا (٤)
 فَالْمُلْقِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا (٥) عُذْرًا أَوْ نُذْرًا (٦) إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعَ (٧) فَإِذَا التُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ (٨)
 وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ (٩) وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ (١٠) وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقْتَتَتْ (١١) لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُجِّلَتْ
 (١٢) لِيَوْمِ الْفَضْلِ (١٣) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الْفَضْلِ (١٤) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٥) أَلَمْ
 نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦) ثُمَّ نُنَبِّعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ (١٧) كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٨) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ
 لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٩) أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَاءٍ مَهِينٍ (٢٠) فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ (٢١) إِلَى قَدَرٍ
 مَعْلُومٍ (٢٢) فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ (٢٣) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٤) أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ
 كِفَاتًا (٢٥) أَحْيَاءً وَأَمْوَاتًا (٢٦) وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَاحِحَاتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ مَاءً فُرَاتًا (٢٧)
 وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٨) إِنظِلُّوا إِلَى مَا كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٩) إِنظِلُّوا إِلَى ظِلٍّ ذِي
 ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ (٣٠) لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ اللَّهَبِ (٣١) إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرِّ رَآلِقَاصِرٍ (٣٢) كَأَنَّهُ
 جِمَالَةٌ صُفْرٌ (٣٣) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٣٤) هَذَا يَوْمٌ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ (٣٥) وَلَا يُؤَدُّنَ لَهُمْ
 فِعْتَدِرُونَ (٣٦) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٣٧) هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَضْلِ جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٨)
 فَإِنَّ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُوا (٣٩) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٠) إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلَالٍ
 وَعُيُونٍ (٤١) وَقَوَائِكِهِ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٤٢) كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٤٣) إِنَّآ

كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٤٤) وَيَلُومُنِي لِّلْمُكْذِبِينَ (٤٥) كَلُّوا وَتَمَتَّعُوا قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ
 مُجْرِمُونَ (٤٦) وَيَلُومُنِي لِّلْمُكْذِبِينَ (٤٧) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ (٤٨) وَيَلُومُنِي
 لِّلْمُكْذِبِينَ (٤٩) فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٠)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

The winds when their reins are let loose bear witness, then they blow dust all over, and the winds which scatter [the clouds], then settle affairs separately, then instil a reminder to leave no justification for some or to inform some, bear witness that indeed the promise which is being made with you is certain to be fulfilled. (1-7)

So when the stars are dimmed, the sky is cleft asunder, the mountains crumble into dust and time is appointed for the prophets – for what day were they deferred? – for the Day of Judgement. And what do you know what this Day of Judgement is? Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (8-15)

Have We not destroyed those before them? Then have We not continued to put their successors behind them? Thus do We deal with criminals. Destruction shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (16-19)

Have We not created you from an insignificant fluid? Then We placed it in a safe abode till an appointed time? Thus did We estimate; how excellently do We estimate! Demolition shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (20-24)

Have We not made this earth one which accumulates the living and the dead? And firmly placed upon it high mountains and provided for you sweet water? – Destruction shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (25-28)

Proceed now to that which you used to deny. Proceed to the shade which has three branches. It does not provide shade or protection from the flames. That fire, it will emit sparks like huge castles – as if they were like yellow camels – Demolition shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (29-34)

That Day will be one in which none will speak and nor will they be allowed to offer excuses. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (35-37)

This is the Day of Judgement. We have gathered you and all those before you. Now if you have a scheme to plot against Me, then do so. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (38-40)

Indeed, the God-fearing will be amid shades and springs and in the bliss of fruits they desire. Eat and drink with relish as reward for your deeds. Thus do We reward the well-doers. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (41-45)

You may eat and enjoy also for a while; you are the wrongdoers. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (46-47)

And when they are asked to kneel before their Lord they do not do so. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny. (48-49)

So what is it after this that they are going to believe? (50)

Explanation

وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ عُزْفًا¹

The word مُرْسَلَاتٌ means “those which are let loose”. Here it is used to signify winds. Although some people interpret it to signify angels, attributes mentioned later are inappropriate to describe angels. The basis of this erroneous interpretation is that an oath is sworn here and it is generally believed that oaths are always sworn by sacred entities. I have pointed out at various places in this *tafsīr* that most oaths in the Qur’ān are meant to substantiate a claim. The oath sworn in this verse is no different. Just as in Sūrah Dhāriyāt, oaths have been sworn by winds to substantiate reward and punishment, this oath has also been sworn to substantiate that the punishment of this world and of the next is certain to come if the disbelievers persist in denying the truth.

The word عُزْفٌ comes for a horse’s mane which hangs from the forehead. It is very commonly used in this meaning. Imru’ al-Qays has said:

نمش بأعراف الجياد اكفنا
إذا نحن قمنا عن شواء مضهَّب

(when we would get up after eating half-cooked food of the prey, we would wipe our hands from the manes of horses.)²

A horse’s mane is used both to stop it and to give it a signal to cut loose. In this verse, winds are compared to horses and letting them loose signifies letting loose their mane. This portrayal is very subtle. The purpose is to highlight the fact that winds cannot act independently and cannot do something of their own accord; they are in God’s control. Whenever He wants, He stops them and whenever He wants, He lets them loose. In Sūrah Hūd, it is said: مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا (٥٦:١١) (there is not a living creature on the earth whose forelock is not in His hands, (11:56)).

1. The winds when their reins are let loose bear witness.

2. Imru’ al-Qays, *Dīwān*, 16.

فَالْعَاصِفَاتِ عَصْفًا (٢)³

The word عَصْفٌ means “to blow all over in an uncontrolled manner”. In Sūrah Yūnus it is said: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِّ وَجْرَبْنَ بِمِهْمٍ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا (until when you are on the ships and they set sail, rejoicing in a favourable wind, suddenly a raging tempest overtakes them and waves embrace them from all sides, (10:22)).

This is the second phase in which after being let loose, winds blow in an unrestrained manner. This obviously refers to tempestuous winds which become a torment and destroy complete nations. The Qur’ān has recorded the history of their multifarious effects and even today one can observe the devastation they cause.

وَالنَّاشِرَاتِ نَشْرًا (٣)⁴

The word نَشْرٌ means “to scatter, to sprinkle, to bring forth and to cause to grow”. It is used in all these meanings in the Qur’ān. Here it refers to winds which bring forth clouds beneficial to man because there are various aspects of نَشْرٌ found in these winds. They bring forth clouds and then scatter them, then sprinkle God’s mercy and then cause vegetation to grow and thereby make the earth luxuriant. At another place in the Qur’ān, it is said: وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ (٤٢:٢٨) (and it is He who sends down the rain after people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy, (42:28))

As indicated earlier, the previous oath relates to tempestuous winds, while this one relates to winds which bring clouds of mercy on which is dependent the existence and nourishment of various life forms.

An important linguistic principle that needs to be kept in consideration here is that co-ordinating the word الْعَاصِفَاتِ by the particle ف to the word الْمُرْسَلَاتِ signifies sequential order. This verse is coordinated with the previous one by the word وَ, which shows that it does not refer to a third phase in the sequence; it rather refers to an independent new category of winds.

فَالْفَارِقَاتِ فَرْقًا (٤)⁵

What is said here is no different to what is said in Sūrah Dhāriyāt by the words فَالْمُقَسَّمَاتِ أَمْرًا (٥١:٤) which refers to the fact that these winds

3. Then they blow dust all over.

4. And these winds which scatter [the clouds].

5. Then settle affairs separately.

distinguish between affairs; at times, they bring forth clouds and, at times, have them blown away; at one place, they cause abundant rain from these clouds and leave another place dry and desolate. This bears testimony to the fact that they are not independent in their actions; they are subservient to some superior power. Since this distinction made by winds occurs after they scatter clouds, the co-ordinated particle is ف.

فَالْمُلْكِيَّاتِ ذِكْرًا (٥)⁶

The implication is that besides rain, the winds also instil a reminder in people.

The Qur'ān at various places has mentioned several things of which rain is instrumental in reminding and I have already explained these aspects. Here I would like to allude to a few prominent features:

- With respect to the harmony between the sky and the earth, rain reminds us of God's *tawhīd* and of showing gratitude to Him.
- the majesty of God's providence found in rain reminds us of our accountability to God.
- By enlivening dead and desolate pieces of land, rain reminds us of raising the dead to life in the Hereafter.
- By bringing mercy to some and misery to some, rain reminds us of God's absolute authority and His reward and punishment.

عُدْرًا أَوْ نُذْرًا (٦)⁷

Mentioned in this verse is the objective of the various effects of winds which are observed by every person. The implication of the particle أَوْ (or) is that no justification is left for people who want to remain inebriated with indifference while those who want to be reminded are afforded an opportunity to be reminded. In Sūrah A'rāf, a remark of a group of the righteous is mentioned which throws light on what is stated in this verse:

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَدِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعذِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (١٦٤:٧)

When a group from among them asked: "What is the use of counselling a people whom God will destroy or sternly punish?" They replied: "So that we may be free from blame in the sight of your Lord, and also that they may fear." (7:164)

6. Then instil a reminder.

7. To leave no justification for some or to inform some.

The implication of the above verse is that if these people pay no heed to the counsel of the righteous, then at least the latter will have discharged their duty. It was now up to the people to accept or reject it and they are left with no excuse which they can present on the Day of Judgement; if, on the other hand, these people after paying heed to the counsel of the righteous are instilled with God's fear, then this was precisely what was intended. It will bring blessings to both.

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ^٨ (٧)

This is the complement of all the oaths mentioned earlier. The word *تُوعَدُونَ* is general and includes both promises and threats. Since this *sūrah* is primarily meant to warn the disbelievers, as indicated earlier, the element of threat dominates this word here. The implication is that the torment and punishment with which people are being threatened is certain to come and the disbelievers are bound to face it.

The various aspects through which the effects produced by winds bear witness to the Hereafter and the punishment that will take place on that day are mentioned in previous *sūrahs*. Readers can look up the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Dhāriyāt for details. Here it would suffice to keep in mind that the Almighty has warned the rejecters of punishment and of the Hereafter by directing their attention to the effects of the winds: they should not be proud of their power and grandeur. If He wants to punish a people, He does not require much effort. The very rain which brings life to people can cause devastation to them in no time. Many a nation has been totally ravaged by the Almighty through these winds.

فَإِذَا التُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ (٨) وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ (٩) وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ (١٠)^٩

Depicted in these verses is the upheaval of the Day of Judgement: on that day, every object of this universe which appears very grand and great, immortal and abiding, firm and solid will be wrecked. Just as one has seen tempestuous winds destroy huge cities, castles and palaces, similarly on that day such a cataclysm will take place that stars will vanish into nothingness, the sky will be cleft asunder and the mountains will crumble into dust.

The verb *طَمَسَ* means “to erase something and obliterate something”. In

8. Bear witness that indeed the promise which is being made with you is certain to be fulfilled.

9. So when the stars are dimmed, the sky is cleft asunder, the mountains crumble into dust.

Sūrah Nisā', a verse reads: (٤٧:٤) مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَنْطَمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا (before We obliterate faces and turn them backwards, (4:47)).

At other places, the words are: (٢ : ٨١) وَإِذَا التُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ (٢ : ٨٢) and

The implication of the verse وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ is that the sky which has no fissures and crevices and is absolutely sound and solid will be cleft asunder on the Day of Judgement. At another place, the words are: (١٩:٧٨) وَفُتِحَتْ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا (and the sky is flung open and therein appear gates all over, (78:19)). Similarly, in Sūrah Infitār the words are) (١ : ٨٢) إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ (When the sky is rent asunder, (82:1)).

The word نَسَفَ in the verse وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ means “to crush to pieces, to mash and to scatter”. This word has been used at a number of places in the Qur’ān. For example, it is said : (٩٧:٢٠) وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْبِفَنَّه فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا (Behold this idol which you have served with such devotion we will burn it to ashes and scatter them all over the sea, (20:97)). The objection raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement has been replied to by the Qur’ān thus: (١٠٦-١٠٥:٢٠) وَبَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا (and they ask you about the mountains. Tell [them]: “My Lord will crush them to fine dust and leave the earth absolutely clean,” (20:105-106)).

At some other places, it is said that on the Day of Judgement, the mountains will be reduced to sand dunes and will appear like a mirage.

In the previous two verses, the fate the sky will meet is described. In this verse, what will happen to the earth is depicted. Among the objects of the earth, the mountains are the most grand and sturdy; their expanse is also matchless. Consequently, when the disbelievers would make fun of the Day of Judgement, they would ask: What would become of the mountains; will they also be destroyed? Here by portraying the fate of the mountains, it is as if the fate the whole earth will meet is depicted. When such gigantic structures as mountains which people regard as eternal will be destroyed, there is no need to mention what will happen to other things of the earth.

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقْتَتَتْ¹⁰ (١١)

This is a mention of the real horror to which all other horrors are mentioned as a prelude. The purpose of fixing a time for the appearance of the prophets shows that they while presenting themselves before the Almighty at an appointed time and in the presence of their people they should tell whether they fulfilled their responsibility of *indhār* or not. If they did, what was the response of their people? At other places in the

10. And time is appointed for the prophets.

Qur'ān, it is mentioned in detail how prophets will be called for this purpose and the attitude of their people will be inquired after and how they will bear witness before these people. A verse in Sūrah Mā'idah reads thus: (يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (١٠٩:٥)) (One day God will gather all the messengers and ask them: "How were you received?" They will reply: "We have no knowledge. You alone know what is hidden," (5:109). People can look up its *tafsīr*. Here the reference is precisely the same. On that day, the case of the prophets and their people will be given a hearing. The Almighty will appoint a day for the appearance of the prophets and their respective people will also be summoned. More details can be seen in the following verse:

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا
عَايِبِينَ (٧:٦-٧)

We will surely question those to whom the messengers were sent, and We will question the messengers themselves. With knowledge We will recount to them what they have done, for We were never away from them. (7:6-7)

The word *أَقْتَتُ* is actually a changed form of *وُقَّتَتْ*. In the Arabic language, such changes in the morphological structure of a word are customary. The expression *الرُّسُلُ أَقْتَتُ* means that time will be appointed for the prophets. This is similar to the expression *أُبْغِنِي خَادِمًا* which is actually *أُنْعِ لِي خَادِمًا*.

لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُجِّلَتْ (١٢) لِيَوْمِ الْفُضْلِ (١٣)¹¹

When the discourse reached a point in which the Day of Judgement was alluded to, the question mentioned in this verse was posed to the disbelievers: Have they understood the great day for which the appearance of the prophets has been deferred? The Qur'ān itself then answers this question by saying that they should take note that this appearance was deferred for the Day when Judgement shall be passed.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الْفُضْلِ (١٤)¹²

This style of discourse is meant to express the awe and greatness of something, as has been explained at a number of places in this *tafsīr*. Just as the question raised in the previous verses highlights the eminence of

11. – For what day were they deferred? – for the Day of Judgement.

12. And what do you know what this Day of Judgement is?

the Day of Judgement, the question raised in this verse highlights the eminence of the Judgement which shall be passed on that day. It is like a reminder of that day's greatness.

وَيَلُّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٥)¹³

The verse depicts the result of the Judgement which will be passed on that day for the disbelievers. This verse, as I have indicated earlier, has been repeated in this *sūrah* many times and in spite of having a deep connection with its previous verse, has an independent status. Some people have regarded it to be the answer to the condition stated earlier. However, this opinion is against linguistic principles of Arabic. Had this been the case, this verse should have begun with the particle ف. Thus for example in Sūrah Muddaththir it is said: فَإِذَا قَدْ لَكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَسِيرٌ (٧٤: ٨-٩). نُقِرَ فِي التَّافُورِ. Similarly, the words in Sūrah Tūr are: يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا وَتَسِيرُ. الْحِبَالُ سَيْرًا فَوَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٥٢: ٩-١١). I have explained this principle because it would be erroneous to interpret this sentence by regarding it to be an answer to the conditional sentences. Here, actually an ellipsis of the answer has occurred, just as it has occurred in the following verses:

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ
وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمَلَأَقِيهِ (٨٤: ١-٦)

As a result of this ellipsis, the verse has become so comprehensive that it occurs at the end of each paragraph of this *sūrah* and at each instance has a specific status.

أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦) ثُمَّ نُنَبِّئُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ (١٧) كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٨) وَيَلُّ
يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٩)¹⁴

This is a historical corroboration of the promise mentioned earlier by the words: “what you are being threatened with is certain to come.” The reference obviously is to the people of Noah (sws), to the ‘Ād and to the Thamūd and to nations of other prophets who followed them the details of which are found in the Qur’ān at other places. These include the people of Lot (sws), Midyan and the people of the Pharaoh. The

13. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

14. Have We not destroyed those before them? Then have We not continued to put their successors behind them? Thus do We deal with criminals. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

implication is that when history bears witness to the fact that the Almighty destroyed all nations which denied the warnings of their respective messengers, then will His practice change today for these criminals who are following the ways of their predecessors?

An incomplete verb is suppressed in the verse: **ثُمَّ نُنْبِئُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ**. If this verse is translated keeping in view this suppression, it would mean: “Have We not been continuously putting those who followed their predecessors behind them.” This persistent practice of the Almighty shows that it is unalterable. This is what happened in the past and this is what will happen in the future. Moreover, this relentless practice of the Almighty also bears evidence to the fact that the day of which the messengers of God have warned their people is certain to come.

Although the verse **كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ** states a general principle, it specifically refers to the fact that the Almighty will also deal with the Quraysh in a similar manner. If they do not desist from their stubbornness, their fate will be no different on the Day of Judgement than that of other criminals. The law of God is the same for all.

After this, the verse **وَيُلْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ** is repeated. Its placement and occasion are absolutely clear. The word **وَيُلْ** encompasses in it all forms of punishment which will be encountered by the criminals on the Day of Judgement and which have been mentioned in the Qur’ān. Though it is apparently a very short word, concealed in its brevity is such horror that cannot be encompassed by the most elaborate of details.

أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَاءٍ مَهِينٍ (٢٠) فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ (٢١) إِلَىٰ قَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ (٢٢)
فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ (٢٣) وَيُلْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٤)¹⁵

The previous verses presented historical evidence. These verses present evidence drawn from the creation of man. The Qur’ān draws evidence on the Day of Judgement from the creation of man in various ways:

- By referring to man’s creation from mud and from a drop of fluid, evidence is drawn on the fact that the Day of Judgement is a possible phenomenon.
- The signs of God’s power, wisdom and creativity in the creation of man entail that a Day of Judgement must come.
- The tremendous system of man’s sustenance elaborately set up by the Almighty also entails that a Day of Judgement must come.

15. Have We not created you from an insignificant fluid? Then We placed it in a safe abode till an appointed time? Thus did We estimate; how excellently do We estimate! Demolition shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

– The innate awareness about good and evil found in a person bears evidence that a Day of Judgement must come.

Although all these arguments are found at various places in the whole corpus of the Qur’ān, if one takes a look at Sūrah Qiyāmah and Sūrah Dahr, all these arguments will be found in them and one may not need to look in other places.

The verses: *أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَاءٍ مَهِينٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ إِلَى قَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ* (have We not created you from an insignificant fluid? Then We placed it in a safe abode till an appointed time?) answer an objection raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement: they expressed their wonder at being created again once their bones decay and decompose into nothingness. The implication is that when no one can deny such an obvious reality as man being created from an insignificant fluid, then how can it be impossible for God to re-create man once he dies and his body also crumbles into dust.

The word *مَهِينٌ* means “insignificant and frivolous”. This word points to the fact that man has not been created from something rare and uncommon so that re-creating him becomes a difficult task. He is created from a trivial and ordinary thing found in abundance in nature. The second objective of using this word is to show that the God whose profound and matchless power can create a human being from a fluid is not powerless to re-create him.

The verse *فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ* (then We placed it in a safe abode till an appointed time) refers to the amazing changes which come about in the fluid as it passes through various stages and reaches its culmination. The word *قَرَارٌ* means “rest” and “place of rest”. Here it refers to the latter and the reference is to the womb which has been appointed as a place of safety for this very purpose. When the word *مَكِينٌ* is used as an adjective for a place, it refers to a place which is secure from hazards, dangers and undue interventions.

The verse *إِلَى قَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ* (till an appointed time) refers to the fact that the fluid is placed in a secure place till an appointed time so that whatever potential is destined to appear in it is given the opportunity. It is then God’s power and might which brings it out from this place once this time expires.

In the verse *فَقَدَرْنَا فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ* the first word is from *قدر* and the second from *قدرة*.¹⁶ After directing attention to various signs and manifestations

16. There seems to be a contradiction between the *tafsīr* and translation of the second *قدر*. The author has translated it in the same meaning as the first; however, while doing *tafsīr*, he has explained the first and second to have different meanings. (Translator)

of God's power, it is said that man should see what miracles and wonders have been worked by God and how great and grand His power is. The implication is that when such great signs of God's power and creativity are evident in man's creation, then it is not impossible for Him to re-create man.

After this, the recurring verse *وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ* is meant to dispel their doubts about being re-created; their own creation is enough to dismiss this rejection. This they shall one day witness with their own eyes and on that day devastation shall be on those who deny. In Sūrah Şāffāt, the words are:

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ هَذَا يَوْمُ
الْفُضْلِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٣٧: ١٩-٢١)

It shall be just one blast when they shall suddenly see around and shall say: "Woe betide us! This is the Day of Judgement which you had been denying." (37:19-21)

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا (٢٥) أَحْيَاءً وَأَمْوَاتًا (٢٦) وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَاهِجَاتٍ
وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ مَاءً فُرَاتًا (٢٧) وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٨)¹⁷

These verses substantiate the Day of Judgement referred to above by mentioning the blessings granted by the Almighty in this world for the sustenance and nourishment of man. This argument has been presented at various places in the Qur'ān and I have been explaining it all along. In short, it can be stated thus: The elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty for looking after and nurturing man and the manner in which He has put the heavens and the earth in the service of man for this purpose shows that man shall definitely be held accountable for his deeds; this accountability is a natural outcome of these blessings; he shall one day be asked whether he fulfilled his obligations towards these blessings or not, and then he who did will be rewarded and he who became arrogant and haughty will be punished for this ingratitude.

The word *كَفَّتْ* in verse *أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا* means "to gather and to bring together". In Arabic, the *فَعَالٌ* form (*wazan*) also comes for the object from which an action emanates. Thus the word *كَفَاتًا* would mean "one that gathers". As regards its meaning, it becomes a potential subject

17. Have We not made this earth one which accumulates the living and the dead? And firmly placed upon it high mountains and provided for you sweet water? – Destruction shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

(*fā'il*) and it is grammatically correct to bring an object (*maf'ūl*) after it.

Here the Hereafter and reward and punishment are substantiated on the basis of providence and the all-embracing nature of this earth. In the succeeding *sūrah*, which is the counterpart of this *sūrah*, the arguments drawn from providence are more detailed. It is said:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا وَالْحِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا
وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا وَبَيَّنَّا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا
وَهَاجًا وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنْ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً نَجْيًا لِيُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا إِنَّ يَوْمَ
الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (٧٨:٦-١٧)

Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? And not created you in pairs? And not made your sleep a means of comfort? And not made the night a covering and the day a time to earn livelihood? And not built above you seven sturdy skies? And not placed in them a glowing lamp? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds so that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? Indeed, the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (78:6-17)

To refer to the all-embracing aspect, the dead are also mentioned with the living. Just as this earth embraces all living creatures, it also embraces all the dead. Those who die, do not go beyond it; they are buried in it; The Almighty entrusts them to the earth which is like a cradle to them in which they are born and in which they grow. This elaborate arrangement has been made so that when the time comes to gather all, the earth will be directed to present what had been entrusted to it; indeed, it will carry out this order. Thus the words in Sūrah Inshiqāq are: (٨٤:٣-٤) وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ and when the earth is stretched out and casts out all things within her and becomes empty, (84:3-4)). To this very aspect, the following verse of Sūrah Zilzāl bears reference: (٩٩:٢) وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَنْقَالَهَا (and the earth shall cast forth its burdens, (99:2)). Evident from these verses is the fact that he who dies is not destroyed; he is given in the custody of the earth. Whenever the Almighty wants, He will raise all creatures from this earth from which they had been originally created. Consequently, it is said in Sūrah Tāha: (٢٠:٥٥) مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى (We have created you from the earth, and to the earth will We return you; and from it We will bring you back for a second time, (20:55)).

If all these verses are deliberated upon, one comes to the conclusion that

man has primarily been created from the womb of this earth and when he dies and is buried, his remains are not lost forever; they are returned to the womb from which he was once born. So when his initial creation was no matter of wonder, his re-creation should not cause incredulity considering the fact that the womb of the earth also has his seed in it.

Verses *وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَايِحَاتٍ وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ مَاءً فُرَاتًا* relate to the subject of providence raised earlier on in *أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا*. At many places in the Qur'ān, it has been alluded to that the mountains play a very important role in making the earth a cradle for the residence and up-bringing of man. This is evident from the above quoted verses of Sūrah Nabā' (78:6-7). Similarly, in Sūrah Luqmān, the words are: *وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ* (and set firm mountains on the earth lest it should lose its balance with you, (31:10)).

Another benefit of the mountains which occupies great importance with regard to providence is alluded to here: the height of these mountains is very effective in controlling the clouds and winds and in gathering natural water resources. Man is in need of sweet water and in order to provide him with this blessing the Almighty has created towering mountains. Only He could have made them; no one else has the power to do so.

In this manner, the discourse has gradually substantiated the Day of Judgement. No need remains to mention it in words. Consequently, its mention has been suppressed and the recurrent verse occurs here: *وَيْلٌ لِّيَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ*. The implication is that people who are fearless of the Day of Judgement in spite of witnessing God's providence and power and are adamant in denying shall be devastated on that day.

انظُرُوا إِلَىٰ مَا كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٩)¹⁸

In the previous verse, the Day of Judgement was substantiated through the signs found in the world inside man and those found outside him. Now in these few verses, it is clearly depicted so that what at the moment eludes the eyes, is portrayed before these disbelievers. The style adopted is such that what is being mentioned is before them and they are being ordered that they should go towards what they have been denying till now and taste it.

انظُرُوا إِلَىٰ ظِلٍّ ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ (٣٠)¹⁹

The horror hidden behind the words: “proceed now to that which you used to deny” is revealed in this verse. The word *ظِلٌّ* means “shadow”;

18. Proceed now to that which you used to deny.

19. Proceed to the shadow which has three branches.

here obviously it does not refer to the conventional shadow but to the shadow cast by smoke. The words in Sūrah Wāqī‘ah are: (وَظِلٌّ مِّنْ يَّحْمُومٍ لَا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ (56:43-44)) (the shade of pitch-black smoke, neither cool nor refreshing. (56:43-44)).

A characteristic of the shadow mentioned here is that it will have three branches. It is evident from this description that the shadow would spread in front of them in all directions. Only the direction from which these disbelievers will be pushed forward will be safe from its impact, as is evident from the word انْظَلُّوا (proceed). This implies that beyond this point smoke will engulf them.

While interpreting this verse, some people have raised the point that disbelief has three characteristics: 1) indifference to God, 2) indifference to God’s creation and 3) rejection of the Day of Judgement. It is as per these three characteristics that three branches of punishment will draw near the disbelievers and engulf them. This point sounds subtle; however, these three characteristics are inseparable and are also not common to the disbelievers. No evidence is found in the sources that disbelievers will be categorized on these bases. Hence, in my opinion, this interpretation seems far-fetched. A clearer interpretation is that directions are in fact four; so when they will be driven away from the direction which is secure from the punishment of the smoke, three directions remain, and all these will be embraced by smoke. It is as if, after being driven from this secure direction, they will be embraced with fire from all sides.

لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ اللَّهَبِ (31)²⁰

Here, a misconception which may arise is clarified forthwith. The shadow will not protect them in any way. In the above quoted verses of Sūrah Wāqī‘ah, it has been similarly said that the shadow will be of pitch-black smoke which is neither cool nor refreshing. In other words, all harmful elements of smoke will be present and none of its useful elements which could have been expected to be present would be there.

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ (32)²¹

The antecedent of the pronoun in إِنَّهَا is the fire, which is suppressed because of the mention of smoke – something which necessitates its presence. Some people have differed in the recital and interpretation of the word قَصْر. However, I have always preferred the *mutawātir* recital in this *tafsīr*, hence the word means “a castle” or “a dome”. It is a very

20. It does not provide shade or protection from the flames.

21. That fire, it will emit sparks like huge castles.

powerful comparison of the flames which arise from a large fire. This comparison depicts the expanse, height and colour of the flames. Castles generally are constructed on a high ground; they shine when viewed from a distance, and the colour of their tops is different from their bases.

كَأَنَّهُ جِمَالَةٌ صُفْرٌ (۳۳) وَيَلُّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (۳۴)²²

The antecedent of the pronoun in the word كَأَنَّهُ is شَرَر (flames) mentioned in the previous verse and the words used are very apt. The word شَرَر is an adjective and can be used as singular or plural, masculine or feminine. Here it is in the plural and for this reason, it is compared to a plural entity جِمَالَةٌ صُفْرٌ (yellow camels). The word جِمَالَةٌ is used for a herd of camels. This comparison reflects both the colour and size of the flames. It is qualified by the word صُفْرٌ because in the wake of smoke, the colour of the flames is faded yellow.

This verse is followed by the recurrent verse. Its occasion is very evident: The day people will witness this horrific scene, on that day devastation shall be on these people who deny that day.

هَذَا يَوْمٌ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ (۳۵) وَلَا يُؤَدُّنَ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُونَ (۳۶) وَيَلُّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (۳۷)²³

After a portrayal of the horror of the Day of Judgement, the helplessness of the criminals is depicted. Today, all these people are trying to be very eloquent and persuasive in their denial of the Day of Judgement; however, on that Day, they will not even be able to open their mouths; no one will be able to speak. In Sūrah Nabā', the counterpart of this sūrah, the words are: لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا (۷۸: ۳۷) (on Whose behalf there is no one who has the authority to speak, (78:37)).

It is specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement, the mouths of the criminals will be sealed and the Almighty will give power of speech to their limbs which will then bear witness to all their crimes. They will neither dare open their mouths nor will they be allowed to present any excuse.

The recurrent verse then follows and its placement and occasion are very obvious: when they will neither even be able to take the initiative in speaking nor will they be granted permission to present any excuse they may have, what is in store for them except death and devastation?

22. – As if they were like yellow camels – Demolition shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

23. That Day will be one in which none will speak and nor will they be allowed to offer excuses. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْقَضَى جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأُولَىٰ (٣٨) فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُوا (٣٩) وَيَلَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ
لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٠)²⁴

These verses directly address the disbelievers. It should be kept in mind that when they would make fun of the Day of Judgement, they would mockingly ask whether their ancestors too will be raised to life. By this sarcastic question, their intention was to prove that the Day of Judgement was the most impossible of events: how can it be imagined, they would scornfully reckon, that all their ancestors would be brought back to life. It is while keeping this question of theirs in consideration that the Qur'ān has emphasized its claim by saying: جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأُولَىٰ (We have gathered you and all those before you).

The implication of the verse فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُوا is that in the previous world these disbelievers contrived great plots to defeat the Messenger of God and if they now have any scheme left, they should test it too; they have with them all the people of their clan both those before them and those who came later, and if these people are in a position to help them, then they should seek their help too.

Here one needs to keep in mind the fact that all efforts undertaken by the disbelievers to deny their Messenger are called كَيْدٌ (plot) by the Qur'ān. The reason for using this word is that all these efforts on their part were merely aimed at saving their position of leadership, as has been explained at various places in this *tafsīr*; they were fully convinced of the veracity of the Prophet (sws); however, their egotism and self-centeredness did not let them acknowledge this fact; moreover, they went about inventing various objections and doubts in order to give the impression to the masses that whatever they were doing was based on reasoning and that they wanted to protect their ancestral religion through this. The truth of the matter, as unveiled by the Qur'ān in this verse, was that this was a plot and contrivance on their part.

This verse is followed by the recurrent verse; again its placement and occasion are very clear; their helplessness before the demand of God referred to earlier will become evident to them and they will face the devastation that will come to them as a result of this denial; it will totally rout them.

24. This is the Day of Judgement. We have gathered you and all those before you. Now if you have a scheme to plot against Me, then do so. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلَالٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٤١) وَقَوَاقِبَ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٤٢)²⁵

The fate which the criminals will encounter on the Day of Judgement is mentioned in the preceding verses: they will be marshalled to a fire whose smoke will engulf them from all sides. Now in these verses, the fate of the righteous is being mentioned. When blessings are mentioned in the manner they are in this verse, the purpose is to bring to light the fact that these blessings will embrace them from all sides. This style can be observed at many places in the Qur'ān, and one can observe several examples of it in classical Arabic poetry.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٤٣)²⁶

This verse gives glad tidings to the righteous. Eating and drinking will be soothing to them and the food and drinks will be absolutely pure and unadulterated. They will be rewarded for their deeds. This is a reference to the fact that whatever the ingrates did in this world will be of no benefit to them in the Hereafter; in fact, it will become a source of their destruction because they did not fulfil the obligation which such favours as eating and drinking entail; on the contrary, what the righteous ate and drank in this world will be of benefit to them because they fulfilled all their obligations and duties.

The word هَنِيئًا means “to be beneficial and advantageous”. It is an accusative of state from the object evident from the previous verb. In Sūrah Nisā', the words are: فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا (٤:٤) in which the *dhu al-hāl*²⁷ is evident; it is very common for an accusative of state to occur from a *dhu al-hāl*. For example, it is said of a traveller: راشدا مهديا.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٤٤)²⁸

This verse points to verse eighteen above whose words are: كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (Thus do We deal with criminals.) Here, in contrast, the dealing of God with the well-doers is referred to.

وَنِلُّ يَوْمَئِذٍِ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٥)²⁹

The placement and occasion of this recurrent verse are quite obvious:

25. Indeed, the God-fearing will be amid shades and springs and in the bliss of fruits they desire.

26. Eat and drink with relish as reward for your deeds.

27. This term refers to the noun which is described by the accusative of state.

28. Thus do We reward the well-doers.

29. Devastation shall be on that Day upon those who deny.

on the one hand, the righteous shall be in eternal bliss and, on the other, the disbelievers shall be subject to severe punishment, as is alluded to earlier. One should imagine the wide gulf between the two. When the two groups will witness one another's fates, at that time the people who were lured by the pleasures of this world and did not care for the Hereafter will realize their wretched fate.

كُلُوا وَتَمَتَّعُوا قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُجْرِمُونَ (٤٦) وَيَلِيَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٧)³⁰

Here at the end, the leaders of the Quraysh are addressed. What is said in the preceding verses was also addressed to them; however, that address was couched in the form of statements of principles. Here they are directly addressed and told that they should not be misled by the luxuries of life they possess in this world and construe that in the Hereafter too they will be blessed with them; on the contrary, these luxuries are transient. If they want to be their recipients in the Hereafter too, they should adopt righteousness; they are wrong-doers and they will get what has been detailed in the previous verses.

The placement and occasion of the recurrent verse are clear: such devastation as cannot be imagined in this world shall be upon the disbelievers on that day.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ (٤٨) وَيَلِيَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٩)³¹

After the disbelievers are addressed in the previous verses, here, in this verse, the address has become indirect. They are reprimanded on their belief that they will be blessed with the luxuries and comforts in the Hereafter too since they have been blessed with them in this world: when they are told to kneel before the Almighty in order to express gratitude to His favours, they do not comply; on the contrary, they express arrogance. Kneeling down here actually refers to the prayer which is the greatest manifestation of showing gratitude to the Almighty and the greatest destroyer of arrogance and pride.

The placement and occasion of the recurrent verse are evident: the megalomaniacs and the haughty who are not ready to carry out their obligations and yet want their rights to be fulfilled should remember that their desires shall never be fulfilled; they will one day witness what is going to happen to them.

30. You may eat and enjoy also for a while; you are the wrongdoers. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

31. And when they are asked to kneel before their Lord they do not do so. Devastation shall on that Day be upon those who deny.

Here, one should keep in mind what is said in Sūrah Qalam: when on the Day of Judgement these disbelievers will be called to prostrate before the Almighty, they will not be able to do so because they never prostrated before Him in this world. This will prove that they too are among the arrogant and for this reason they too will deserve the punishment which is specifically reserved for the arrogant.

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٠)³²

This verse reprimands the disbelievers on their stubbornness and expresses hopelessness about their embracing faith: when they do not profess faith in what the Qur'ān is warning them about, then what else will they profess faith in? In other words, nothing can be more persuasive, more eloquent and more potent than the Qur'ān. When it is not able to influence their hearts and minds, then what more can convince them? In other words, this verse actually assures the Prophet (sws) that the ailment of the disbelievers is incurable. They cannot be convinced through reason and argument; they will only believe when they see everything with their own eyes but at that time this belief will be of no use to them.

Some people have interpreted the word بَعْدَهُ to mean that after the advent of this day in which they will profess faith. To them, the verse means that if professing faith by paying heed to these warnings is beneficial, it is today; whether they profess faith or not when that day comes would become immaterial; on that day, everyone will profess faith but this will not be of benefit to anyone of them. Although this interpretation is possible, yet if the parallels of the Qur'ān are kept in consideration, the interpretation I have done seems more convincing. In Sūrah Jāthiyah the words are: (فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعَدَ اللَّهُ وَأَيَّاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦:٤٥) (and what can be greater than the revelations of God in which they will profess belief? (45:6)). Although both these interpretations are correct and the purport of the verses is not much different in either, however, my interpretation seems more comprehensive. God knows best and His knowledge is all-embracing and sound.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*.
فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ أَوْلَىٰ وَأَخِيرًا (gratitude be to God from the beginning to the end)

Rahmānābad,
8th March, 1979 AD
8th Rabī' al-Thānī, 1399 AH

32. So what is it after this that they are going to believe?